THE THIRD SPEECH OF THE LORD GEORGE DIGBY,

To the Houſe of Commons;
Concerning Biſhops, and the
Citie *Petition*, the 9th. of
Febr: 1640.

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THE
TWISTED
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The Lord *Digbies* Speech to the Houſe of COMMONS, concerning Biſhops, and the *Citie Petition the ninth of Febr.* 1640.

Mr. *SPEAKER*,

I Know it is a tender ſubject I am to ſpeake of, wherein I beleeve ſome within theſe walls are engaged with earneſtneſſe in contrary opinions to mine; and therefore it will bee neceſſary, that in the firſt place I beſeech the patience of this Houſe, that they will bee pleaſed to heare mee without interruption, though ſomewhat I ſay ſhould chance to bee diſpleaſing, I hope there will bee ſomewhat from mee ere I conclude, that may bee of ſervice to this Houſe.

Sir, if I thought there were no further deſigne in the deſires of ſome, that this *London* Petition ſhould bee committed, then merely to make uſe of it, as an Index of grievance: I ſhould winke at the faults of it, and not much oppoſe it.

There is no man within theſe walls, more ſenſible of the heavy grievance of Church government, then my ſelfe; nor whoſe affections are keene to the clipping of thoſe wings of the Prelates, whereby they have mounted to ſuch inſolencies, nor whoſe zeale is more ardent to the ſearing them, as that they may never ſpring againe.

But having reaſon to beleeve, that ſome ayme at a totall extirpation of Biſhops, which is againſt my heart, and that the committing of this Petition, may give countenance to that deſigne, I cannot reſtraine my ſelfe from labouring to divert it, or at leaſt to ſet ſuch notes upon it, as may make it ineffectuall to that end.

Truly Sir, when this Petition was firſt brought into the Houſe, I conſidered it in its nature, in the manner of the delivery in the preſent conjuncture of affaires, both Eccleſiaſticall and Civill, to be a thing of the higheſt conſequence that any age hath preſented to a Parliament; and the ſame thoughts I have of it ſtil.

I pro-

I profeſſe, I looked upon it then with terrour, as upon a Commet a blaſing ſtarre, raiſed and kindled out of the ſtench, out of the poyſonous exhalation of a corrupted Hierarchy: Me thought the Commet had a terrible tayle with it, Sir, and pointed to the North, the ſame feares dwell with mee ſtill concerning it, and I beſeech God they may not prove Propheticall: I feare all the Prudence, all the Fore-caſt, all the Vertue of this Houſe, how unitedly ſoever collected, how vigorouſly applyed, will have a hard worke of it. Yet to hinder this meteor, from cauſing ſuch diſtempers and Combuſtions by its influence, as it then portended by its appearance, what ever the event be, I ſhall diſcharge my conſcience concerning it freely, and uprightly, as unbyaſt by popularity, as by any Court reſpects. Sir, I could never flatter, the ſenſe of this Houſe, which I reverence ſo much, as to ſuppreſſe a ſingle no, that my heart dictated, though I knew the venting of it might caſt prejudices upon mee, had my fortune plac't mee neere a King, I could not have flattered a King. And I doe not intend now to flatter a multitude.

I ſhall deſire thoſe worthy Aldermen, and the reſt here of the Citie of *London*, not to take any thing I ſhall ſay in the leaſt way of diſparagement, or reflection on the Citie, I looke not

not upon this Petition, as a Petition from the Citie of *London*, but from I know not what, 15000. Londoners, all that could bee got to subscribe.

When this Petition was first presented, there might bee more reason for the Commitment of it, as being then the most comprehensive Catalogue wee had of Church grievance, but now that the Ministers by their remonstrance, have given us so faire, and full an Index of them without those mixtures of things contemptible, irrationall, and presumptuous, wherewith this Petition abounds, I doe not know I professe to what good end it can bee committed, being full of contemptible things, but first let me recall to your mind the manner of its deliverie: And I am confident, there is no man of judgement, that will thinke it fit for a Parliament, under a Monarchie, to give countenance to irregular, and tumultuous assemblies of people, bee it for never so good an end: Besides, there is no man of the least insight into nature, or Historie, but knowes the danger, when either true or pretended stimulation, of conscience, hath once given a multitude agitation.

Contemptible things (Sir) swarme in the 8. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. Articles of this Petition. Did ever any body think, that the gaites of *Ovid*, or *Tom. Caryes* muse, should by 15000. have beene

beene presented to a Parliament, as a motive for the extirpation of Bishops, the scandall of the Rochet, the Lawne sleeves, the foure corner Cap, the Cope, the Surplesse, the Tippet, the Hood, the Canonicall Coat, &c. may passe with arguments of the same weight, onely thus much let me observe upon it (Mr. *Speaker*) that one would sweare the Penners of the Article had the pluming of some Bishops already, they are so acquainted with every feather of them. In a word, I know not whether bee more prepostorous to inferre the extirpation of Bishops from such weake Arguments, or to attribute as they doe to Church government all the civill grievance not a patent, not a Monopolie, not the price of a commodity raised, but these men make Bishops the cause of it.

For the irrationall part (Mr. *Speaker*) first they petition us in a Method onely allowable with those, whose Iudgement or Iustice is suspected, that is *Inquum petere, ut æquum feras*; There is no Logick, no reasoning in their demands: It were want of Logick in mee to expect it from a multitude, but I consider the multitude in this is led by implicite faith, to that which hath beene digested, and contrived but by a few, and in them truly I cannot but wonder at the want of Reconciliation here.

A Petition, Mr. *Speaker*, ought in this to be a kind of Silogisme, that the Conclusion, the

prayer ought to hold proportion with the premiſſes, that is with the Allegations, and Complaints, and to bee reaſonably deduc't from them.

But what have wee here a multitude of Allegations, a multitude of Inſtances, of abuſes, and depravations of Church government: And what inferred from thence, let the uſe bee utterly aboliſht for the abuſes ſake: As if they ſhould ſay, that becauſe Drunkenneſſe and Adultery are growne ſo epidemicall, as is alleadged in the Petition. Let there bee no more uſe of Wine, nor of Women in the Land.

Chriſts diſcipline hath beene adulterated, 'tis true, the whole Church inebriated by the Prelates, therefore inferre our Petitioners, let not ſo much as the chaſte, the ſober uſe of them bee ſuffered.

Give mee leave to continue one of the Compariſons a little further, ſhould it be demonſtrated unto us, that Wine could not be made uſe of without drunkenneſſe, and withall ſome ſuch liquor preſented, as healthy, and as nouriſhing, from which no diſtemper could ariſe; I ſhould not blame any man for deſiring to pluck up the Vine by the roots. But for the moveable ills-ſake, to take away the ſolid good of a thing, is juſt as reaſonable in this, as to root up a good tree, becauſe there is a Canker in the branches.

For the bold part of this Petition, Sir, what can

can there bee of greater presumption, then for Petitioners, not only to prescribe to a Parliament, what, and how it shall doe; but for a multitude to teach a Parliament, what, and what is not, the government according to Gods Word.

Besides, what is the Petition against, is it not against the government of the Church of *England*, established by Acts of Parliament? Is it not against the Liturgie, against severall formes of Divine Service, ratified by the same Authority?

'Tis true, Mr. *Speaker*, the Parliament may mend, may alter, may repeale Lawes, may make new, and I hope in due season wee shall doe so in point of Church-government: but in the meane time let mee tell you, Sir, I cannot but esteeme it an irreverence, an high presumption in any to petition point blanck against a Law, or Government in force.

Representment of inconvenience may bee made, (as the Ministers have done) such as may endure the wisdome of a Parliament, to advise Lawes, to rectifie, to repeale them; but it imports the very essence of Parliaments, to keepe up the honour of its former Acts, and not to suffer them to bee further blasted from abroad.

Beleeve me, Mr. *Speaker*, all the reverence and authority, which wee expect from future times to our owne Acts, hereafter depends upon our upholding the dignity of what for-

mer Parliaments have done, even in thoſe things which in their due time wee may deſire, and intend to reverſe.

Mr. *Speaker*, you ſee in what plaine language I have ſet forth unto you the faults of this Petition, notwithſtanding as great as they are, ſo they may not obtaine any ſeeming countenance from us; I find my ſelfe willing to have them paſt by, eſpecially when I conſider how naturally prone all mankind is, when it finds it ſelfe oppreſt beyond patience, to fly unto extreames for eaſe. And indeed, I doe not think, that any people hath beene evermore provoked, then the generality of *England*, of late yeares, by the inſolencies, and exorbitances of the Prelates.

I proteſt ſincerely, Mr. *Speaker*, I cannot caſt mine eye upon this Petition, nor my thoughts on the practiſes of the Church-men, that have governed it of late; but they appear'd to mee as a ſcourge employed by God upon us for the ſinnes of the Nation; I cannot thinke of that paſſage in the Booke of *Kings*, Hee that eſcapes the Sword of *Hazael*, ſhall *Iehu* ſlay, and he that eſcapes *Iehu*, ſhall *Eliſha* ſlay.

Mee thinkes, the vengeance of the Prelates hath beene ſo laid, as if 'twere meant no generation, no Degree, no Complexion of Mankind ſhould eſcape it.

Was there a man of a nice and tender conſci-

ence,

ence? him have they afflicted with ſcandall in Adiaphoris, impoſing on him thoſe things, as neceſſary, which hee thinkes unlawfull, and they themſelves knew to be but indifferent.

Was there a man of a legall conſcience, that made the eſtabliſhments by Law, the meaſure of his Religion? him have they netled with innovations with freſh introductions to Popery.

Was there a man of a meeke and humble ſpirit, him have they trampled to dirt in their pride.

Was there a man of a proud, and arrogant nature, him have they bereft with indignation at their ſuperlative inſolence about him.

Was there a man peaceably affected, ſtudious of the quiet, and tranquillity of his countrey? their incendiariſhip hath plagued him.

Was there a man faithfully addicted to the Right of the Crowne, loyally affected to the Kings Supremacy, how hath hee beene galled by their new Oath? a direct Covenant againſt it.

Was there a man tenatious of the liberty, and propriety of the ſubject, have they not ſet forth Bookes, or Sermons, or Canons diſtructive to them all.

Was there a man of a pretty ſturdy conſcience, that would not blanch for a little. Their pernicious Oath hath made him ſenſible, and

wounded, or I feare prepared him for the Divell.

Was there a man that durſt mutter againſt their Inſolencies? he may inquire for his Luggs, they have beene within the Biſhops viſitation; as if they would not onely derive their Brandiſment of the ſpirituall ſword from S. *Peter*, but of the materiall one too, and the Right to cut off Eares.

Mr. *Speaker*, as dully, as faintly, as unlively, as in Language theſe Actions of the Prelates have beene expreſſed unto you, I am confident there is no man heares mee but is brimfull of Indignation.

For my part I profeſſe I am ſo enflamed with the ſenſe of them, that I finde my ſelf ready to cry out with the lowdeſt of the 15000 downe with them, downe with them, even to the ground.

But M. *Speaker*, when I caſt mine Eye round upon this great and wiſe Aſſembly, and find my ſelf a part too (though the moſt unworthy and Inconſiderable) of that Senate, from whoſe diſpaſſionate and equall Conſtitutions, preſent and future times muſt Expect their happineſſe or Infelicity.

It obliges mee to the utmoſt of my power to diveſt my ſelf and others of all thoſe diſturbances of Judgement which ariſe ever from great provocations, and to ſettle my thoughts

in

in that temper which I thinke neceſſary to all thoſe that would judge cleerely of ſuch things as have incenſt them.

I beſeech you gentlemen let us not be led on by paſſion to popular and vulgar Errors, it is naturall (as I tould you before) to the multitude to fly unto Extremes, that ſeemes ever the beſt to them, that is moſt oppoſite to the preſenteſt object of their hate.

Wiſe Councells (M. *Speaker*) muſt ſquare their reſolutions by another meaſure, by what's moſt juſt, moſt honourable, moſt convenient: Beleeve mee, Sir, great alterations of Government are rarely accompanied with any of theſe.

M. *Speaker*, wee all agree upon this; that a Reformation of Church Government is moſt neceſſary, and our happy unity of opinions herein ſhould be one Argument unto us to ſtay there, but Sir, to ſtrike at the Roote, to attempt a totall Alteration, before ever I can give my vote unto that, three things muſt be made manifeſt unto mee.

Firſt, that the miſchiefes which wee have felt under Epiſcopall Government flow from the nature of the function, not from the abuſes of it only, that is, that no Rules, no Bamdaryes can be ſet to Biſhops able to Reſtraine them from ſuch Exorbitances.

Secondly, ſuch a frame of Government muſt be

be layde before us, as no time, no Corruption can make lyable to proportionable inconveniences with that which wee aboliſh.

And thirdly, it muſt be made to appeare that this *Utopia* is Practicable.

For the firſt, Sir, that Epiſcopacy a function deduced through all ages of Chriſts Church, from the Apoſtles times and continued by the moſt venerable and ſacred order Eccleſiaſticall; a function dignified by the learning and Piety of ſo many Fathers of the Church, glorified by ſo many Martyrdomes in the Primitive times, and ſome ſince our owne bleſſed Reformation, a government admired (I ſpeake it knowingly) by the learnedſt of the Reformed Churches abroad, and laſtly a Government under which (till theſe late yeares) this Church hath ſo flouriſhed, ſo fructified, that ſuch a government, ſuch a function, ſhould at the fagg end of 1640 yeares be found to have ſuch a Cloſe Devill in it, as no power can Exerciſe, no Law reſtrayne appeares (Sir) to me a thing very improbable: I profeſſe I am deceived Sir if Triennial Parliaments will not be a Circle able to keepe many a worſe Devill in order.

For the ſecond, I know not the ſtrength of other mens fancies, but I will confeſſe unto you ingenuouſly the weakneſſe of my faith in the poynt, that I do not beleeve there can any other Government bee propoſed but will

will in time be ſubject to as great or greater inconveniences then Epiſcopacy, I meane Epiſcopacy ſo ordered, reduct and limitted as I ſuppoſe it may be by firme and ſollid boundaryes.

Tis true Sir, wee cannot ſo well judge before hand of future inconveniences, for the knowledge of the faults and miſchiefes of Epiſcopall government reſulting from freſh and bleeding Experience.

And the inſight into dangers of any new way that ſhall be propoſed being to riſe only from ſpeculation, the apprehenſion of the one is likely to be much more operative then of the other, though perhaps in juſt reaſon it ought to be the weaker with us, it is hard in ſuch caſes for us to preſerve an equall and unpropenſe judgment; ſince being in things of this world ſo much too hard for faith and contemplation: yet as Divine as our inſpection is into things not experimented, if we harken to thoſe that would quite extirpate Epiſcopacy, I am confident that inſteed of every Biſhop wee put downe in a Dioceſſe, wee ſhall ſet up a Pope in every Pariſh.

Laſtly M. *Speaker*, whether the ſubverſion of Epiſcopacy, and the introducing of another kind of Government bee practiceable, I leave it to thoſe to judge who have conſidered the connexion and interweaving of the Church Government with the Common Law, to thoſe

who heard the Kings Speech to us the other Day, or who have looked into reaſon of ſtate.

For my part (though no Stateſman I will ſpeake my mind freely in this) I doe not thinke a King can put downe Biſhopps totally with ſafety to Monarchy; not that there is any ſuch Allyance as men talke of twixt the Myter and the Crowne, but from this reaſon; that upon the putting downe of Biſhopps, the Government of Aſſemblies is likely to ſucceed it. That (to be effectuall) muſt draw to it ſelfe the ſupremacy of Eccleſiaſticall Juriſdiction that (conſequently) the power of Excommunicating Kings as well as any other Brother in Chriſt, and if a King chance to be delivered over to Sathan, Judge whether men are likely to care much what becomes of him next.

Theſe things conſidered M. *Speaker*, let us lay aſide all thoughts of ſuch dangerous, ſuch fundamentall, ſuch unaccompliſhed Alterations: & all thought of countenancing thoſe thoughts in others; let us all reſolve upon that courſe wherein (with union) wee may probably promiſe our ſelves, ſucceſſe, happines, and ſecurity, that is in a through Reformation.

To that, no mans vote ſhall be given with more zeale, with more heartines then mine. Let us not deſtroy Biſhopps, but make Biſhopps ſuch as they were in the Primitive times.

Doe their large Territories, their large Revenues

nues offend ? let them be retrencht, the good Biſhop of *Lippo* had but a narrow Dioceſſe.

Doe their Courts and ſubordinates offend ? let them be brought to Governe, as in the Primitive times, by Aſſemblies of their Clergie.

Doth their intermedling in ſecular affaires offend ? exclude them from the capacity, it is no more then what reaſon and all Antiquity hath interdicted them.

That all this may be the better effected, M. *Speaker* my motion is that: Firſt, wee may appoint a Committee to collect all greevances ſpringing from the miſgovernment of the Church (to which the Miniſters head of Government will be ſufficient without countenancing this Petition by a Comitment) and to repreſent it to this houſe in a Body.

And in the next place that we may (if it ſtand with the order of Parliaments) deſire that there may be a ſtanding Comittee of certaine members of both Houſes who (with a number of ſuch learned Miniſters as the Houſes ſhall nominate for Aſſiſtants) may take into conſideration all theſe greevances, and adviſe of the beſt way to ſettle peace and ſatifaction in the Government of the Church, to the comfort of all good Chriſtians and all good Commonwealths men.

FINIS.